

**SENATE TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE**  
**SENATOR ALAN LOWENTHAL**  
**2007-2008 Session**

**Committee Policy On:                    DOUBLE FINE ZONES**

**Policy:** The Committee will not consider any measure which would designate a specified highway segment as a “Safety-Enhancement-Double Fine Zone.”

**Discussion:** Under prior legislation that has since expired, a series of state and county highway segments were designated as double fine zones (DFZs). The courts were authorized to increase, and in some cases, double the base fine for specified moving violations that occur within these zones. The legislation also required Caltrans to conduct a study of the DFZs to evaluate their effectiveness in reducing accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

A 2002 Caltrans report concluded that, while some reductions in the number and severity of collisions did occur in some of the DFZs, the reductions were not statistically significant. Further, a number of uncontrolled variables, such as physical improvements to roadway segments, changes in enforcement levels, and the initiation of public awareness campaigns made it virtually impossible to ascertain how much, if any, of the reductions in collisions could be attributed to the doubling of fines. Therefore, Caltrans concluded that the benefits of DFZs could not be proven.

Upon expiration of the various DFZ authorizations, legislators introduced several bills to reinstate the previously authorized DFZs. With one exception, these efforts were unsuccessful due to concerns that the DFZs had not been proven effective and that they could be misused as a tool to generate revenue.

In light of ongoing interest in DFZ legislation, the Legislature passed SB 988 (Migden), Chapter 593, Statutes of 2006 to establish a “safety awareness zone” (SAZ) program. An SAZ is a segment of highway on which a combination of engineering, education, and enforcement measures has been taken to reduce speeding or other violations of law. The purpose of this bill is to create a procedure for communities throughout the state to raise awareness among drivers using designated highway segments in order to reduce the number of accidents, injuries, and fatalities on those roadways. While the bill provides for increased attention to the roadway, it does not provide for the doubling of fines for violations that occur within designated segments.

The bill allows a road segment to be designated as an SAZ if the following requirements have been met:

- The road segment has been declared eligible for designation in statute.
- Each local governing body with jurisdiction over the area in which the eligible segment is located has adopted a resolution indicating its support for the designation.
- Each local governing body with jurisdiction over the area has developed and adopted an SAZ plan addressing education, enforcement, and engineering measures intended to address the safety need.
- The SAZ plan has been approved by the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the California Highway Patrol (CHP), if the road segment is on the state highway system.

SAZ designation is to be deemed effective immediately upon satisfaction of the above requirements and shall remain in effect for a period not to exceed three years from the effective date. Once a road segment has been designated, Caltrans is required to develop a sign to notify motorists of the presence of an SAZ and to place and maintain the sign as long as the designation is in effect. Designations may be renewed for a period of three years upon approval by Caltrans and CHP of an updated SAZ plan.

In light of the SAZ program and the lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of DFZs, this committee will not consider bills that designate road segments as DFZs.

Adopted by the Senate Committee on Transportation and Housing on March 29, 2011.